U.S. Sends Back 29 Cuban

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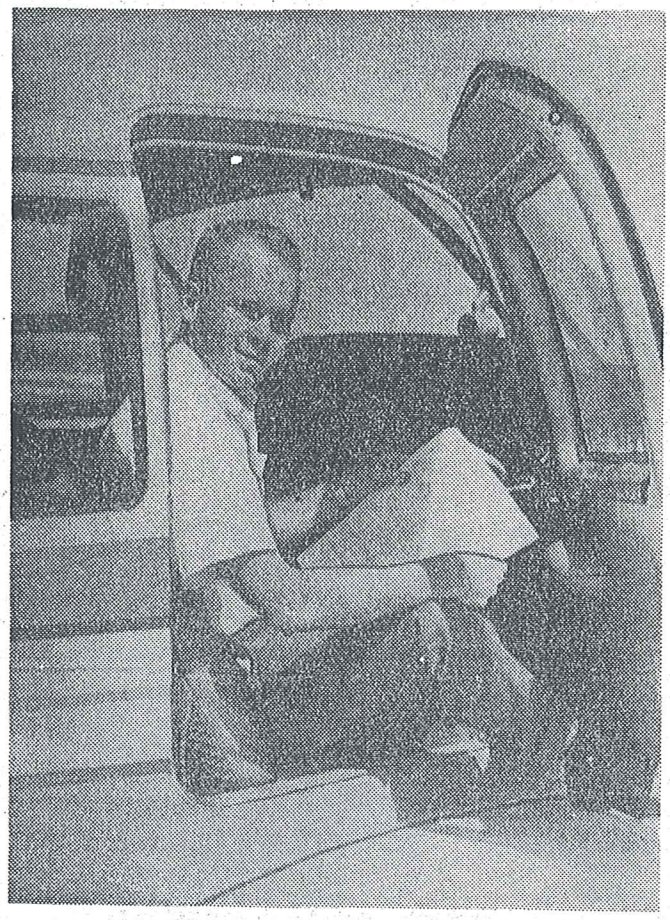

Associated Press

Richard Wright, 23, who was forced at gunpoint to fly two Cubans from Miami to Havana this week, is shown back in Key West yesterday. Wright flew the small twin-engine plane back as the four Cuban fishing boats started their return trip home.

Twenty-nine Cuban fishermen set out yesterday from Key West, Fla., for their homeland in what amounted to a happy ending in an unpleasant diplomatic incident.

The men were due to sail in their four trawlers early yesterday but were delayed for hours by mechanical trouble.

All had been freed by a Florida court after the four captains were found guilty of poaching in state waters and given suspended jail sentences plus fines of $500 each. The fines were promptly paid by a Czech diplomat whose country represents Cuban interests in Washington. The charges against the crewmen were dismissed.

The four Cuban boats were picked up by U.S. vessels on Feb. 2 for entering American waters, an action which set off an angry exchange between Havana and Washington and led to some strong words from Moscow backing the regime of Fidel Castro.

Just Minor Incident

At first the United States thought the incident was some sort of deliberate Castro provocation. But on examination it was downgraded to a minor incident. There is no Federal penalty for entering American waters but there is a Florida law forbidding that so the United States turned the men over to the State court.

It also was evident that the quick payment of the fines by the Czech diplomat indicated a lack of desire by Moscow to carry the incident any further. In Havana, however, a rally Wednesday night produced Cuban claims that the outcome of the affair was "another victory against enemies of the revolution."

Fisherman

Castro reacted to the incident by shutting off the water to the American base at Guantanamo, Cuba. In turn, the United States cut the pipeline permanently, began to fire Cuban employes and planned to establish a new water filtration plant.

The fishermen themselves left jail yesterday joking and smoking long cigars, United Press International reported. But they had to wait about five hours before the boats got under way. Two U.S. Coast Guard cutters escorted the trawlers and a spokesman said they would travel halfway to Cuba to prevent any incidents, especially from roving anti-Castro sea raiders.

Hijacked Pilot Flies Plane to Key West

KEY WEST, Fla., Feb. 20 (UPI) — Richard Wright, the pilot who was forced to fly at gunpoint to Havana Tuesday, landed here unexpectedly at 12:05 p.m. today.

Wright, 23, had been expected to arrive in Miami about 1 p.m. on his return from Havana in the hijacked plane.

He was held overnight by Cuban military authorities but was released late yesterday. He said he was treated "very politely" by Cuban authorities.

Wright, of Miami, spent last night as a guest in the Havana home of the Swiss Ambassador, who looks after U.S. interests in Cuba.